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## Media Contacts

Scott Cassel  
Product Stewardship Institute, Inc.  
617-236-4822  
[scott@productstewardship.us](mailto:scott@productstewardship.us)

Jamie Silberberger  
Women's Voices for the Earth  
406-543-3347  
[jamie@womenandenvironment.org](mailto:jamie@womenandenvironment.org)

### **Western States Roll Out Recycling Program for Products Containing Mercury** *Retail Collection at Select Ace Hardware Stores in Montana, Utah, and South Dakota*

**BOSTON, May 1, 2008** - Starting today, consumers can recycle compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) and mercury-containing thermostats at select Ace Hardware stores in Montana, South Dakota, and Utah as part of a pilot coordinated by the Product Stewardship Institute, Women's Voices for the Earth and Ace Hardware. This take-back, pilot project, funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, and local utilities, runs from May through December 2008 and is expected to help greatly reduce the mercury pollution these products can create.

"The goal of this program is to provide consumers with a way to safely recycle these mercury products at easily accessible retail outlets," said Scott Cassel, PSI's Executive Director. "Ace Hardware has taken a leadership position on this issue and will provide residents with a simple way to recycle used CFLs, fluorescent tubes, and mercury-containing thermostats."

Fluorescent lamps and thermostats both contain mercury, a naturally occurring toxin that can affect the nervous system. Although no mercury is released when these products are in use or intact, when disposed of in the trash, crushed, incinerated, or otherwise broken, they can cause mercury to be released into the environment.

By using participating Ace Hardware locations, these products can be collected rather than ending up in landfills and dumps where toxins can be released. After collection, all the products will be shipped to Veolia Environmental Services and the Thermostat Recycling Corporation, where the mercury is removed and other materials recycled.

"Mercury products are typically collected at local household hazardous waste collection sites, but these can be in out-of-the way places or open for limited hours," said John Essmann of Ace Hardware. "By providing a safe and convenient location for fluorescent lamp and thermostat recycling, retailers can play an important role in reducing mercury pollution."

The use of CFLs has exploded in the last few years with rising energy costs driving consumers to purchase the energy efficient light bulb. CFLs not only use less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs but also last up to 13 times longer. Because they require less energy to produce light, CFL use significantly reduces the amount of greenhouse gas and other emissions from power plants.

"The only responsible way to promote energy efficient CFLs is to also promote recycling of those bulbs," said Dori Gilels, Executive Director of Women's Voices for the Earth. "We're proud to

be involved in a project that shows how consumers, retailers, and energy companies can work together to save energy costs and maintain a healthy environment.”

“Here at Montana Ace we have a very strong commitment to our customer, our community, and the environment,” said Don Pearce, General Manager of Montana Ace Hardware. “This program, initiated by the Women’s Voices for Earth, goes hand in hand with that commitment. We encourage communities to participate in the program at any of our five locations.”

More than 250 million CFLs were sold in the United States in 2007. It is estimated that only 2% of CFLs are recycled. While sales of mercury-containing thermostats, which contain a larger amount of mercury, are on the decline as manufacturers have shifted production to non-mercury digital thermostats, there are still an estimated 50 million mercury-containing thermostats in homes throughout the United States. Until now, safe disposal options for many consumers in Utah, Montana, and South Dakota have been limited or nearly non-existent.

“Although CFLs have an average lifespan of five years, efforts are needed now to create an infrastructure that supports recycling of these products,” added Cassel. “With the lessons learned here, we’ll create a how-to guide for retailers across the country to institute their own CFL and thermostat recycling programs.”

The Flathead Electric Cooperative, Flathead County Solid Waste, and Ravalli County Electric Cooperative are also directly supporting the project. Montana residents can participate in this program at select Ace locations in Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, Hamilton, Helena, Kalispell, Laurel, Missoula, Polson, Ronan, and Whitefish.

Consumers can bring their mercury thermostats and up to 7 CFLs or other fluorescent lamps (up to 4-foot long linear tubes) at a time to participating Ace stores. For more information, including specific collection locations, please visit <http://www.productstewardship.us> or [www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org).

*The Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) is a national environmental institute with membership from 44 states, 51 local governments, and more than 20 businesses, environmental groups, and organizations that establishes cooperative agreements to reduce the health and environmental impacts from consumer products.*

*Women’s Voices for the Earth (WVE) is a national non-profit women’s environmental health and justice organization that works to reduce or eliminate toxic chemicals that adversely impact human health, and to engage women as active participants in creating healthy communities.*

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